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## Two Poems

Travis Sharp

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# TWO POEMS

Travis Sharp

## FROM "AMERICANS ARE FROM MARS"

It was dark, very dark, I was alone, in a cave, in a mountain, no longer outside, for it was raining, and Americans are allergic to the weather.

It was dark, it was cold, I was alone, in the world, and the rain is an irritant to my brain, which is cold, in the dark, in the cave, in the mountain, in the American imaginary.

It was America, it was dark, it was cold, it was imaginary, and we were allergic to one another.

It was an allergy, but unlike other allergies, it was nationalistic, it believed in American exceptionalism, it was cold and it was dark and it was a cave, it rejected mountains.

It was the world, full of America, which was spreading, sprawling like a suburb, it was a suburb, it was very neat, very tidy, it was arranged.

It was a man, it was American, it was cold, it was a cave, and it thought itself a mountain, its speech was prophetic, for the mountain appeared, it was tall, like the man, who was a cave, hidden under the mountain, he was a missile silo, he craves devastation, it is very important to him.

It is a mountain, it is good, it is bad, it is fake, it is real, it has a sublime circumference.

In the cave, on the ground, covered in mosses, amidst the dampness, I found myself alone, with all the small creatures of the world, they were hiding, away from America, from its imagination, which was spreading, sprawling like a fungus, like a fungus that kills trees, releases toxins in the soil, it kills all the animals, it

takes up their nitrogen as a sort of food, it was American, it was a man, rejecting mountains. He preferred flatness. He gravitated toward fields and easily paintable landscapes. He settled in.

PAIN = TIME

as in,

pain = the past, or

pain = the present, or

pain = the future, or

when { past, present, future } = that which is transcendable,

when the present, a gaping

hole, when it hurls itself

forward, when standing still,

when the rivers run

red, when it's a

memory,

when there's another shooting,

when you're afraid to leave the house,

when the past, shattered and

shattering, when you're just a rag,

when it's a place,

when he chokes you again,

when it's the future, too far, too soon,

when you can taste the color,

when side by side,

when you sew your own mouth,

when the sun remains

shrouded, when a man

approaches you, when a man

reaches toward you, when a

man,

some body moves through space  
and space ripples onto space  
but in violent contact space  
folds onto itself, the ripples  
bounce here and there until  
you can no longer  
point, there is  
no here or  
there,  
there is  
no  
pointing,  
only the fold  
ing and the lig  
ht scr  
ea  
m of  
spa  
ce co  
mp ac  
ting

or, when there is no pointing, pointing turns inward. *who hurt you?* and the hand has to turn back, not-pointing at yourself. *yes, you hurt you.*

that special form of trauma, a sort of echo but tangible, a sort of matter but ephemeral, that second substance of trauma, the fear that life will erode or simply end just as it begins to get better:

that which grips the flesh so tightly it becomes it:

these inscriptions on the flesh are not poetry but a form of mathematics, like how one person + one person = one person  
how one person + one person = two one persons  
how fifty thousand one persons – less than one hundred one persons = fifty thousand one  
persons how a one person becomes a one person through touch, address of the flesh:

in touch  
in words  
in a gaze

and the math of this

TRAVIS SHARP grew up in rural Alabama and now lives in Buffalo, NY. He's written the chapbook *Sinister Queer Agenda* (above/ground press, 2018) and the artist's book *one plus one is two ones* (Recreational Resources, 2018). He's a PhD student in the SUNY Buffalo Poetics Program, teaches youth writing workshops at the Just Buffalo Literary Center, and is an editor and designer at Essay Press.